

November 2, 2007

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon (D-LA), made the following statement today after President Bush vetoed the Water Resources Development Act of 2007 (WRDA), which had recently passed both Houses of Congress with overwhelming bipartisan support. The compromise legislation includes authorization for over \$3 billion in projects for south Louisiana, including full authorization for the Morganza-to-the-Gulf hurricane and storm protection system, \$1.9 billion for a comprehensive federal coastal restoration plan, closure of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet, and channel deepening at the Port of Iberia. The bill also authorizes numerous other water resource projects throughout the country.

Rep. Melancon made the following statement following the President's veto:

"The President decided today that the value of the vital needs authorized by this WRDA bill - including over \$3 billion in critical hurricane protection and coastal restoration projects for south Louisiana - did not outweigh the portions of the bill he disapproved of."

"Every day WRDA is delayed is another day that Louisianians in Terrebonne and Lafourche remain unprotected from storms because we haven't broken ground on Morganza. Every year that we don't pass a WRDA bill is another year that Louisiana's

coastal wetlands wash away even further because we haven't begun work on the comprehensive coastal restoration plan being developed by the state and the Corps. And every hurricane season that goes by without WRDA becoming law is another season that the citizens of St. Bernard and New Orleans remain more vulnerable to deadly storm surges because the MRGO hasn't been closed. We can't wait any longer.

"I have assurances from my leadership in the House that Congress will not make the people of south Louisiana to wait any longer. We will be voting to override the President's veto as soon as we get back in session next week, and I expect the Senate will follow suit. Congress has come up short in finishing a WRDA bill for seven years now, but rest assured, we are so close that we won't be stopped now. Louisiana's hurricane protection and coastal restoration needs must not be pushed aside any longer, and I will do everything in my power to make sure WRDA becomes law despite the President's veto."

Included in the WRDA bill the President vetoed today is full authorization for the Morganza to the Gulf of Mexico Hurricane and Storm Protection System. This 64-mile system of levees, locks and floodgates will provide hurricane and flood protection to about 120,000 people and 1,700 square miles in Terrebonne and Lafourche Parishes who currently have no hurricane protection. Congressman Melancon has made Morganza to the Gulf one of his top priorities in Congress, and has secured assurances from his leadership that this vital project would not be removed from WRDA bill.

WRDA also authorizes \$90 million to bring the federal levees in the Lafourche Parish Levee District up to 100-year protection, which will offer better protection to residents in the parish and make their homes eligible for the National Flood Insurance Program.

Also, WRDA authorizes up to \$100 million to consolidate the scattered levees in lower Jefferson Parish into a comprehensive hurricane protection system for the town of Lafitte.

In addition, WRDA authorizes approximately \$1.9 billion for the Corps of Engineers to carry out the comprehensive program for the restoration of the Louisiana Coastal Area. This program will help restore populated and coastal areas significantly impacted by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and will help in preventing future damage from hurricanes and storm surge, by slowing the continuing land loss, and replenishing the coastal marshes of southern

Louisiana. The bill also authorizes the Corps to integrate into this comprehensive program the findings of a current Corps study for "category 5" protection for coastal Louisiana.

Finally, WRDA deauthorizes and calls for the physical closure of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet ("MR-GO"), the 76-mile ship channel through St. Bernard Parish that has been dubbed the "hurricane highway." Rep. Melancon has long advocated in Congress for the complete closure of MR-GO because of the environmental degradation it has caused in St. Bernard Parish and the threat it poses to the parish's residents. Shortly after the Katrina, Rep. Melancon worked in Congress to pass legislation to stop any further dredging of the MRGO to ensure that the channel could begin to silt in while the Corps came up with a plan for the MRGO's long-term future.

Congress is supposed to pass a new WRDA bill every two years. However, no new WRDA bills have been signed into law since 2000 because the House and Senate have repeatedly been unable to reach a compromise on the legislation since then. As a result, many vital projects in south Louisiana have been stalled, awaiting authorization from Congress.